

## SPECIFICATION

### TELE-INVENTORY SYSTEM, AND IN-SHOP TERMINAL AND REMOTE MANAGEMENT APPARATUS FOR THE SYSTEM

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#### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

##### 1. Field of the Invention:

10 The present invention relates to a  
tele-inventorying system for inventorying various  
kinds of commodities in a shop, such as a department  
store and a convenience store, from a place remote  
from the shop, and also relates to an in-shop terminal  
and a remote management apparatus for the  
15 tele-inventory system.

##### 2. Description of the Related Art:

20 Generally, department stores or convenience  
stores periodically make an inventory of various  
kinds of commodities on sale throughout the shop  
premises in stock on shelves. During the  
inventorying, commodities of each kind are counted  
and the respective consume-by dates of commodities,  
such as food (especially perishable food), are  
25 checked.

A big retailing company, such as a franchising  
company, who controls a large number of chain retail

stores, such as franchisee stores, in a centralized fashion regards the inventorying of various kinds of commodities on sale and/or in stock as important because the company has to estimate the potential sales figure for every kind of commodity as accurately as possible from the results of inventorying. Thanks to this inventorying, each large-scale retail store, with numerous selling areas, can grasp the details of sales for every selling area, streamlining the management of sales of many kinds of commodities throughout the whole store.

Many retail stores sell food, particularly fresh food, which has to be consumed within a limited date/time; food whose consume-by date/time has terminated or will terminate shortly must be removed from shelves without fail to eliminated the possibility of customers buying such out-of-date food. It is therefore important to check the consume-by date of each and every food commodity by making an inventory of all food commodities.

As the usual practice in, for example, a department store, inventorying is carried out by many sales clerks at the respective sales areas while the store is closed. In the meantime, sales clerks of a typical convenience store, which opens around-the-clock, make an inventory of commodities

between serving customers.

However, in a department store, partly because inventorying is laborious and time-consuming due to the disarrayed commodities on shelves and partly because inventorying must be carried out at night when the store is closed or a relatively small number of customers visit the store, it is difficult to reserve sufficient manpower for the inventorying, causing a management problem. Another problem is that shorter-cycle inventorying, which franchisees or companies, for example, have started to require for their franchisee stores in recent years, is beginning to impose considerable burdens on store managers. Many employees and clerks of such chain stores consider the inventorying to be an unattractive job and hence tend to concentrate on serving customers while skipping inventorying, if possible.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

With the foregoing problems in view, it is an object of the present invention to make an inventory of commodity, which are sold and stocked in a selling area of a shop, from a remote management apparatus that is installed remotely from the shop, lightening the burden imposed on operating retail